

Sunday, October 12, 2025 | Martyrs

Week 9 | Acts 10:23b-48 | “The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles, Pt. 2”

**READ:** Acts 10:23b-48 (ESV)

The next day, he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. <sup>24</sup> And on the following day, they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had **called together his relatives and close friends**. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and **worshiped** him. <sup>26</sup> But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; **I too am a man**.” <sup>27</sup> And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, “You yourselves know how **unlawful** it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should **not** call any person **common** or **unclean**. <sup>29</sup> So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

<sup>30</sup> And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was **praying** in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing <sup>31</sup> and said, ‘Cornelius, your **prayer** has been heard and your **alms** have been **remembered** before God. <sup>32</sup> Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ <sup>33</sup> So I sent for you at once, and you have been **kind** enough to come. Now therefore we are all here **in the presence of God** to hear all that you have been commanded **by the Lord**.”

<sup>34</sup> So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that **God shows no partiality**, <sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who **fears him** and **does what is right** is **acceptable** to him. <sup>36</sup> As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace **through Jesus Christ** (he is Lord of all), <sup>37</sup> you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: <sup>38</sup> how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. <sup>39</sup> And we are **witnesses** of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to **death** by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God **raised** him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> **not to all** the people but to **us** who had been **chosen** by God as **witnesses**, who **ate** and **drank** with him **after** he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he commanded us **to preach** to the people and **to testify** that he is the one appointed by God to be **judge** of the **living** and the **dead**. <sup>43</sup> To him **all the prophets** bear

witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

I want you to notice three things:

**i. 10:1-23a – A Gentile gets a heavenly vision.**

**So, what’s the takeaway?**

The Gospel views all people as invited guests.

**ii. 10:23b-48 – The Gentiles hear the Gospel.**

**Vs. 23-24** – Peter “rose and went away with” Cornelius’s men. But interestingly, the apostle didn’t go alone. Luke says, “Some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.” In 11:12, we find out that “six” Jewish Christians accompanied Peter. These acted as witnesses. The fact that so many went ensured that whatever happened would be well-documented.

Upon Peter's arrival in 'Caesarea,' he found that 'Cornelius was expecting them.'Not only that, but he had also called together his relatives and close friends.' This demonstrates Cornelius's eagerness to share this message with those closest to him.

**Vs. 25-26** – Luke says that Cornelius “fell down at [Peter’s] feet and worshiped him.” Given the moment, we can hardly blame the centurion. Interestingly, John does the same thing to an angel in Rev. 19:10. But only God is to be worshipped (cf. Matt. 14:33; 28:9; Lu. 24:52; Jn. 9:38; 20:28). Thus, similar to what the angel tells John, Peter puts Cornelius on his feet, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” The apostle knew his place. Later, in Ac. 12:20-23, Herod Agrippa will fail to give God glory as people are praising him, saying, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” And, as a result, the blasphemous king is struck down. It is a grave sin to claim that which belongs only to the Lord.

**QUICK ASIDE:** Respect for the man of God is appropriate. The writer of Hebrews says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as

those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17; cf. 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). **Reverence for the man of God is abhorrent.** After condemning the religious leaders of the day, Jesus tells his followers, “But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (Matt. 23:8-12). No church leader is perfect, and every believer and every pastor does themselves significant harm when they forget this. Only God and his word are due both respect and reverence.

**Vs. 27-29** – After this, Peter entered Cornelius’s home and “found many persons gathered.” As with Jesus, Peter could draw a crowd. But rather than launch into presenting the Gospel, Peter needed to address the elephant in the room. He says, “You yourselves know how **unlawful** it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation.” **When Peter says “unlawful,” he's not referring to an OT commandment, but rather Jewish tradition and customs.**

Interestingly, no OT command states that a Jew would become impure by coming in contact with Gentiles. However, there were a few things that could defile a Jew: eating unclean animals (cf. Lev. 11), child birth (cf. Lev. 12), skin diseases, mold, or mildew (cf. Lev. 13-14), and bodily fluids (cf. Lev. 15). Since Gentiles didn’t abide by the OT commands, and thus didn’t avoid such things, the Jews reasoned that their lifestyle made them inherently unclean and their uncleanness could be transferred to others.

For example, when the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, John says, “**They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover**” (Jn. 18:28). During Passover, a Jew had to expel all forms of leaven from their midst (cf. Ex. 13:7). In fact, eating yeast during Passover was such a *severe* offense that the offending party was supposed to be “cut off from the congregation of Israel” (cf. Ex. 12:15, 19).<sup>1</sup> Pilate was a Roman, so he likely had leavened bread on the palace grounds. And so, the Jews steered clear to avoid becoming “defiled” by leaven.

Additionally, Jews believed Gentiles buried aborted babies in their homes and even “flushed them down the drains.”<sup>2</sup> And, according to Mosaic law, a Jew would be

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<sup>1</sup> Köstenberger, Andreas J., *John*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 524.

<sup>2</sup> Carson, D.A., *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 588.

contaminated if they touched a dead body or interacted with a grave in any way (cf. Num. 9:7-14; 31:19). Ceremonial uncleanness of this sort was significant, lasting no less than a week. And if a defilement of this nature took place during the Passover, a Jew would be forced to celebrate the feast a month later (cf. Num. 9:11).

So, all that to say, the Jews, for one reason or another, avoided interacting with Gentiles, and they would never willingly enter their home. The fact that Peter hosted a group of Gentiles overnight, traveled with them for two days, and even entered Cornelius's home was quite the unusual sight. **What Peter was doing was scandalous.**

Why did Peter break the Jews' customs and traditions? He says, **"God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean."** This is, of course, a reference to the vision that Peter had while atop Simon the Tanner's roof. The **"many persons gathered"** were like the **"all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air"** (Ac. 10:12) on the sheet. The voice from heaven said, **"What God has made clean, do not call common"** (Ac. 10:15). The things that once defiled a person no longer do so. The lines that once separated people groups no longer do so. As we talked about last week, **"The Gospel views all people as invited guests."** Now, even Gentiles are a part of God's family, something he prophesied would happen: **"By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice"** (Gen. 22:16-18). This is why Paul says, **"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"** (Gal. 3:28-29).

Now that Peter has addressed the elephant in the room and then justified his presence in Cornelius's house, he tells them, **"I came without objection,"** which is a reference to how the Spirit told him, **"Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them"** (10:20).

The apostle says, **"I ask then why you sent for me."** Peter knows it's okay to associate with Gentiles. He knows that God has orchestrated this meeting. But he still does not know the purpose of his visit. Why is he here? What do they want from him? Though he had traveled with Cornelius's men for a couple of days, they didn't tell him everything that had happened. Perhaps they didn't know.

**Vs. 30-33** – After recounting his side of the story, Cornelius makes a request: “Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.” Technically, Peter hadn’t been commanded to tell them anything. But he had been commissioned by Christ to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

**Vs. 34-35** – Cornelius' vision and willingness to listen were all Peter needed. Peter begins with two principles:

- (1) Peter says, “God shows no partiality.” Despite what the Jews thought, the Lord doesn’t play favorites. John the Baptist warned the Jews, “do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham” (Matt. 3:9). And Paul warned gentile Christian not to think they were better than the Jews, saying, “For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you” (Rom. 11:21).
- (2) Peter says, “In every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” To be clear, the apostle isn’t advocating for a works-based salvation (cf. vs. 43). What he’s saying is similar to the point made in Isaiah 66:1-2, where the Lord says, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the Lord. “These are the ones I look on with favor: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.” A proper **profession** of faith is evidenced by an appropriate **performance** of faith. Cornelius was a Roman, born in Rome, and a centurion in the Roman military. He could not be any less Jewish. And yet he worshipped the Jewish God, prayed regularly, and gave alms to the poor. Such good works demonstrated a saving faith that was on par with the likes of another non-Jewish person who also happened to be a centurion (cf. Matt. 8:5-13). **Faith is expressed by good works, namely, reverence for the Lord and obedience to his word.** Such things turn the head of God himself. This why John the Beloved Apostles says, “whoever *does* [emphasis added] the will of God lives forever” (1 Jn. 2:17). And even Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does* [emphasis added] the will of My Father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Saving faith expresses itself through good works such that, without works, faith is dead (cf. Ja. 2:14-26).

**Vs. 36** – Peter says that before God’s message was sent to all the nations, it was first “sent to Israel,” and the apostle characterizes this message as “preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ.” The Son of God is the means by which God makes peace. Paul says, through Jesus Christ, “we have peace with God...[and] obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand” (Rom. 5:1-2).

But just because the “preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ” first came to the Jews does not mean Jesus was only the King of the Jews. Peter says, “He is Lord of all.” Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords (cf. 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:19; 19:16).

**Vs. 37a** – Peter says, “You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea.” Everyone had heard about Jesus. The things he did were common knowledge.

**Vs. 37b-43** – Peter distills Jesus’ life and ministry into seven parts:

- (1) The **commencement** of Jesus’ ministry – It’s interesting that Peter doesn’t begin with Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem but begins with “the baptism that John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.”
- (2) The **characteristics** of Jesus’ ministry – “He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are **witnesses** of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.”
- (3) The **culmination** of Jesus’ ministry – “They put him to **death** by hanging him on a tree but God **raised** him on the third day.”
- (4) The **corroborators** of Jesus’ ministry – Peter says God made Jesus “to appear, **not to all** the people but to **us** who had been **chosen** by God as **witnesses**, who **ate** and **drank** with him **after** he rose from the dead.”
- (5) The **continuation** of Jesus’ ministry – Peter says Jesus “Commanded us **to preach** to the people and **to testify** that he is the one appointed by God to be **judge** of the **living** and the **dead**.” Mankind will have to stand before Jesus, the supreme Judge of the universe, and without his forgiveness, every soul will be condemned to hell for all eternity.
- (6) The **credentials** of Jesus’ ministry – Peter says that “**all the prophets** bear witness” to Jesus
- (7) The **consequence** of Jesus’ ministry – Peter says, “Everyone who **believes** in him **receives forgiveness** of sins **through** his name.” As good as Cornelius’s works were, he still needed to believe. He could not earn his salvation. He needed to put his faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

**Vs. 44-46** – Luke says, “**While** Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit **fell on all** who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were **amazed**, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out **even on the Gentiles**. For they were hearing them speaking **in tongues** and **extolling God**.” This moment has often been referred to as the Pentecost for the Gentiles.

**Vs. 47-48** – In light of the clear manifestation of the Holy Spirit, Peter declares, “**Can anyone withhold water for baptizing** these people, who have **received the Holy Spirit** just as we have?” And he commanded them to be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.” All who put their faith in Christ are baptized in Christ.

**So, what’s the takeaway?**

**Faith** in Christ brings the **full filling** of the Holy Spirit **for all**.

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

As we’ve discussed in our study of Acts (e.g., week 6 of *Filled* and week 3 of *Martyrs*), while faith, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, baptism, and repentance are all connected in some way throughout the narrative of Acts, the **sequence** of these events isn’t always the **same**, save for faith. **Belief *always* comes first.** Looking at Acts, it cannot be said that the Holy Spirit **only** comes **after** baptism; nor can it be said that the Holy Spirit **only** comes **before** baptism. In some scenarios, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit comes **before** baptism (cf. 9:17-18); but in others, it comes **after** baptism (cf. 2:38). Sometimes the Holy Spirit comes **after** the apostles pray and lay their hands on believers (cf. 8:17; 19:5-6), and other times, as is the case here in Ac. 10, he’s **already** indwelt a community of believers before they’ve been baptized or had any direct interaction with an apostle. **These examples illustrate the challenge of discerning *normative* practice from Acts.** While there are truths to be gleaned, we’d be mistaken if we consider **every** detail in the Book of Acts as indicative of what ***the church should be*** rather than what ***the church was becoming***.

By the time Paul wrote Ephesus, which was around 60 AD (cf. Ac. 19), it was understood that when a person hears “**the gospel of [their] salvation, and [believes] in him, [they are] sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until [all believers] acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory**” (Eph. 1:13-14). **From that point forward in the church’s history, to the present day and into the future, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

**coincides** with the moment of salvation. The Spirit that worked on the day of Pentecost and in Cornelius's household is the same Spirit that works today. We all have the same Holy Spirit, even though we are Gentiles!

iii. 11:1-18 – Jewish believers welcome Gentile believers.

**Vs. 1** – Luke

**So, what's the takeaway?**

**Religion**

Love for

### **Video Description:**

#### **Martyrs | Week 9 | Acts 10:23b-48 | "The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles, Pt. 2"**

Last week, we were introduced to Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian Cohort who just happened to be a follower of the Jewish faith. He was known both for his piety and his charity. The Lord came to him in a vision, telling him to send for the Apostle Peter.

Cornelius did as he was instructed, and it was while his men were on the way to Joppa that Peter also had a vision. The Lord revealed that animals once thought of as unclean are now considered clean. But, as we'll see today, God wasn't really talking about food; he was talking about people.

The Gospel is for all people, from every tribe, nation, and tongue.

### **Sermon Manuscript:**

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